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John Pope

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: John Pope – Failure at Second Battle of Bull Run

Author: Daniel B. Morio, Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy

Research Question: Was the failure of the Army of Virginia at the Second Battle of Bull Run a result of General John Pope being a failure as a leader or were there other circumstances that helped him in his loss?

Discussion: General Pope had a long career in the Army that to the Second Battle of Bull Run had gone well. Pope had distinguished himself in the Mexican-American War and had done well early on in the western theater of operations during the Civil War. With his assumption of command in northern Virginia, Pope entered a realm in which he was unfamiliar, not welcomed by the troops he led and out of his league with regards to the Confederate leaders arrayed against him.

Pope's paranoia regarding commanders who had come from General George McClellan's Army of the Potomac resulted in a lack of trust in first hand accounts from senior officers as well as intelligence presented. This lack of trust resulted in his disregarding the fact that General Lee and Longstreet had moved 25,000 Confederate soldiers through Thoroughfare Gap and combined forces with General Jackson and deployed them along the right flank of Jackson's forces and perpendicular to Pope's force. This force then proceeded to assail the Union flank to nearly disastrous proportions.

Conclusion: The fog of war has clouded the judgment of many generals throughout history and Pope was no exception. The fog of war negatively affected his imagination and ability to think critically throughout the battle.

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## **Bull Run – Introduction**

In July 1861, the Union and the Confederate states met at Bull Run to determine the outcome of the War of the Rebellion. The enthusiasm for a decisive victory to end the rebellion died along with the many thousands who were killed, wounded and missing at the conclusion of that battle. Almost thirteen months later, from 28 – 30 August 1862, the Union Army of Virginia, commanded by General John Pope, and the Confederate *Army of Northern Virginia*, commanded by *General Robert E. Lee*, fought at Bull Run. The results of this battle brought the Union to the depths of near defeat while the Confederate drive for freedom crested.

Pope's loss at the Second Battle of Bull Run caused him to be labeled an incompetent general. This paper will attempt to show whether this labeling was correct. The orders he issued will be analyzed for validity and tactical soundness.

There are six sections that comprise the bulk of this paper. They are: Pre-Bull Run Build Up; Bull Run – 28 August 1862; Bull Run – 29 August 1862; Bull Run – 30 August 1862; Bull Run – Post Battle; and Bull Run - Analysis. The first section, Pre-Bull Run Build Up covers the timeframe leading up to the issuance of the Order Constituting the Army of Virginia, signed on 26 June 1862 through the end of the day on 27 August 1862, the day prior to the Second Battle of Bull Run. The issuance of the Order Constituting the Army of Virginia is included in this section as well as an explanation as why the Army of Virginia was created. Also included in this section is information regarding the level of cooperation between Pope and General George B. McClellan, Commanding General of the Army of the Potomac. This section also details the General Orders that Pope issued to his troops along with the effects these orders had

upon Union and Confederate generals, specifically, McClellan and *Lee*. This section concludes with the cat and mouse chase that took place upon the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers.

The next four sections: Bull Run – 28 August 1862; Bull Run – 29 August 1862; Bull Run – 30 August 1862; and Bull Run – Post Battle cover the specific days of and immediately following the battle. Each section details specific accounts of fighting while also providing identification and analysis of orders and leadership of Pope.

The last section of this paper, Bull Run – Analysis, examines the Joint Order that Pope issued on 29 August along with the options that were available to Pope on the morning of 30 August. The Joint Order analysis breaks the order down into the intent of the order and whether it was written in an understandable way. Several options are also presented for actions Pope could have taken which could have prevented the rout of Union forces on 30 August.

Union and Confederate Orders of Battle are located in appendix A for further reference.

### **Pre-Bull Run Build-Up**

On 22 June, responding to a summons by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Pope arrived at the War Department, where he met with and discussed the current war situation with Secretary Stanton. Secretary Stanton told Pope that the armies of General John C. Fremont, in western Virginia, General Nathaniel P. Banks, in the Shenandoah Valley, and General Irwin McDowell, near Washington, were going to be combined to form the Army of Virginia. Combining these three armies was designed for several reasons: to facilitate the defense of Washington against attack by *General Jackson* and his Confederate corps; to inhibit *Jackson* returning his corps to the Richmond area to reinforce the Confederate forces defending against McClellan and the Army of the Potomac; and if the situation should present itself, to defeat *Jackson's* corps. The prime objective of the Army of Virginia was to keep *Jackson* away from Washington and Richmond, and in order to accomplish this objective, the Army of Virginia was to threaten Gordonsville and Charlottesville.

Pope was offered the position of commanding general of the newly formed Army of Virginia, the combined armies of Fremont, Banks, McDowell, the forces of General Sturgis located at Alexandria, and the defensive forces in Washington. Pope initially declined the offer to command the Army of Virginia. Pope's rationale for turning the offer down was multi-faceted. The first reason was that he knew his success depended upon cooperation with McClellan's Army of the Potomac and Pope felt that the likelihood of receiving cooperation from McClellan was slim. Pope believed he would not receive any cooperation based on different political affiliations as well as style. McClellan was a Democrat who treated Southern noncombatants too softly. Pope was a



Republican who treated Southern noncombatants harshly, as evidenced by his leadership style in Missouri. A second reason was where the Army of Virginia would be positioned should McClellan's Army of the Potomac be defeated. The Army of Virginia would be vulnerable to an attack from the entire Confederate army. The third and final reason for initially turning the offer down were the current Corps commanders. McDowell, Banks and Fremont were all senior in rank to Pope. He felt that they would feel humiliated and resentful, sentiments they undoubtedly would convey to their troops.<sup>1</sup> President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton did not order Pope to accept the position they offered, however, they did suggest that it was his patriotic duty and serving the greater interest of the public to accept the duties as commanding general. Pope reluctantly acquiesced.

On 26 June, President Lincoln signed the order creating the Army of Virginia. The mission expanded beyond what was explained to Pope. The Army of Virginia was to "...operate in such manner as, while protecting western Virginia and the nation's capital from danger or insult it shall in the speediest manner attack and overcome the rebel forces under *Jackson* and *Ewell*, threaten the enemy in the direction of Charlottesville, and render the effective aid to relieve General McClellan and capture Richmond."<sup>2</sup> The Army of Virginia consisted of approximately 43,500 troops including 5,000 cavalry. The Army of Virginia was arrayed under three corps: Fremont's I Corps with 13,500; Banks II Corps with 10,000; and McDowell's III Corps with 20,000.

I and II Corps were in the Shenandoah Valley conducting operations, while the III Corps was spread out from Manassas to Fredericksburg in northern Virginia. On 27 June, Fremont resigned, refusing to serve under a former subordinate. Secretary Stanton

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<sup>1</sup> Cozzens, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Order Constituting the Army of Virginia, Executive Mansion, June 26, 1862, OR XII, part 3:435.

responded by placing General Franz Sigel in command I Corps, denying Pope the privilege of selecting a replacement. Sigel was a foreign born German-American admired by a large portion of the German-American population. Since the German-American population, as a whole, voted Republican, Sigel was politically untouchable. Banks was also a Republican political appointee. He had been a Governor of Massachusetts and Speaker of the House. He too was untouchable, as his removal would have caused much dissension among the Republicans of the New England states. Pope viewed McDowell as the only worthwhile general that served under him, despite McDowell's fame as the general responsible for the debacle at the First Battle of Bull Run.<sup>3</sup>

Pope's first priority was to physically join with his army and organize it. Initially he was unable to join with his army as a result of President Lincoln holding him in Washington to explain McClellan's dispatches during the Seven Days' Battle. Pope ordered, via telegraph, I and II Corps to march to Front Royal, just beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains. Additionally, a division of III Corps was to move from Manassas to Warrenton. The intent was to create a line of forces between Sperryville and Warrenton, which would then proceed south.

McClellan mentioned the possibility of changing his base of operations from White House Landing on the York River to Harrison's Landing on the James River, and withdrawing the Army of the Potomac from its attack on Richmond while he awaited reinforcements. Pope advised President Lincoln that it would be unwise for McClellan to change the base of the Army of the Potomac. Pope's rationale was that it would compel a

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<sup>3</sup> George B. Gordon, *A History of the Campaign of the Army of Virginia under John Pope* (Boston, 1889), II.

relieving force, presumably his Army of Virginia, to fight through the entire *Army of Northern Virginia* in order to reach the Army of the Potomac.<sup>4</sup> President Lincoln accepted Pope's advice, yet he allowed McClellan the latitude to choose his own path: "Save your Army at all events...General Pope thinks if you fall back it would be much better toward York River than toward the James."<sup>5</sup>

The same day President Lincoln sent the message to McClellan, Pope was asked during a cabinet meeting if the Army of Virginia could be taken south to attack Richmond from the west in order to relieve pressure on the Army of the Potomac to facilitate its attack from the east. Pope replied that he would attack the Confederates whenever and wherever he was ordered, however, for the Army of Virginia to attack this way would require McClellan to be ordered to attack the enemy at the same time. Without an order to attack, McClellan could let the Army of Virginia be sacrificed while he watched from afar.<sup>6</sup> Despite the supposed confidentiality of the meeting, McClellan found out about these comments made by Pope, further deepening the distrust between both generals.

As the Seven Days' Battle ended, McClellan had failed to take Richmond and repositioned the Army of the Potomac's base to Harrison's Landing. He requested large numbers of reinforcements that were denied by President Lincoln. President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton failed to notify Pope to stop preparing the Army of Virginia to move south. Pope wrote a letter to McClellan that outlined his operations and saying "it is my earnest wish to cooperate in the heartiest and most energetic manner with you."

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<sup>4</sup> Schutz and Trennery, 97-99.

<sup>5</sup> O.R. XI, Pt. 3, 269.

McClellan's reply said nothing about cooperation and promised: "As soon as Burnside arrives, I will feel the force of the enemy and ascertain his exact position. If I learn that he has moved on you, I will move to Richmond and endeavor to take it." To Pope, this chilly reply summed up the lack of cooperation that McClellan exhibited toward Pope and the Army of Virginia. Pope felt he was to take the brunt of the Confederate attack, thereby allowing McClellan to take Richmond unopposed.<sup>7</sup>

The *Army of Northern Virginia*, under *General Robert E. Lee*, had approximately 55,000 troops with which to attack Pope.<sup>8</sup> Realizing that two to one odds against his force was unacceptable, Pope requested to be relieved of command and sent back to the West. Upon President Lincoln's refusal to honor the request, Pope returned to the original operational intent of the Army of Virginia: "... to operate upon the Confederate lines of communication to the west and northwest as to force him to make such heavy detachments from his main force at Richmond as would enable the Army of the Potomac to withdraw from its position at Harrison's Landing and to take ship for Aquia Creek or for Alexandria."<sup>9</sup>

While Pope sat in Washington advising President Lincoln, he envisioned filling the position of General-in-Chief of the Army with Halleck, his old commanding general. This supreme General-in-Chief, senior in rank to both McClellan and Pope, would permit Pope to be a co-equal with McClellan instead of a subordinate when the Army of

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<sup>6</sup> 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, "*Report of General Pope*," *Conduct of the War: Supplemental Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. Vol 2* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1866), p. 104-5.

<sup>7</sup> Pope, Final Report, January 27, 1863, OR XII, part 2:20, 22.

<sup>8</sup> John Codman Ropes *The Army Under Pope* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 198.

<sup>9</sup> Pope, Final Report, January 27, 1863, OR XII, part 2:23.

Virginia and Army of the Potomac combined.<sup>10</sup> President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton had thought about filling the vacant position with Halleck before, and now with Pope's recommendation they finalized it. The only problem for Pope was that it took Halleck several additional weeks to finally arrive in Washington, and President Lincoln would not release Pope to join the Army of Virginia until Halleck arrived. The appointment of Halleck upset McClellan tremendously. Not only was a one time subordinate being promoted to a position of superiority, but also he was ordered to relocate his forces, transferring them to Pope. McClellan felt that he was being stripped of his command and was going to be forced to retire.<sup>11</sup>

Pope fueled the fire of distrust and competitiveness between himself and McClellan with public and private comments that aligned him with the Republicans. While talking to the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Pope espoused that slavery must be abolished immediately. Comments that were directed at McClellan included his thoughts that the Peninsular Campaign was poorly handled and was a mistake that weakened the defenses of Washington and created a supply line that was tenuous. Pope also opined that McClellan's base should never have been changed to Harrison's Landing and that all that could be done with the Army of the Potomac was to bring it back from the Peninsula and remove McClellan from command for "incompetency and indisposition to active movements."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The original order constituting the Army of Virginia specified that when the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Virginia shall be in position to communicate and directly cooperate at or before Richmond, while so operating together, shall be governed, as in like cases, by the Rules and Articles of War. With McClellan being senior in rank, McClellan would command the two armies if they met at Richmond.

<sup>11</sup> Schutz and Trennery, 109-110.

<sup>12</sup> David Donald, ed., *Inside Lincoln's Cabinet, The Civil War Diaries of Salmon P. Chase* (New York, 1954), 97-98.

Complying with the original orders which established the Army of Virginia, Pope ordered General John Hatch, who commanded II Corps Cavalry to go to Culpeper, while sending a strong picket to Orange. Five days later, Pope telegraphically ordered the II Corps Cavalry to seize Gordonsville and Charlottesville. Pope was sorely upset when the swift cavalry raid did not materialize due to Hatch's misinterpretation of Pope's order. Pope envisioned the employment of a pure cavalry force without infantry, artillery or wagons. Hatch failed to comprehend this vision, gathering a large force that included all of the above. The delay associated with gathering these forces allowed *General Richard Ewell*, a subordinate of *Jackson*, to take possession of Gordonsville. Pope rescinded any further movement south and decided to have the Army of Virginia await his arrival, in order to discuss things with his three corps commanders in person.

With McClellan sitting at Harrison's Landing and Pope awaiting a physical meeting before moving his army, *Lee* moved *Jackson* and *Ewell* to Louisa Court House in order to guard the Virginia Central Railroad and to prevent any Union advance towards Richmond.

Pope addressed his troops for the first time, via telegraph and printed version on 14 July 1862. This address through implied and direct wording insulted eastern Union forces, specifically McClellan, by saying

"I have come to you from the West, where we have always seen the backs of our enemies, from an army whose business it has been to seek the adversary and to beat him when he was found. Whose policy has been attack and not defense. In but one instance has the enemy been able to place our Western armies in a defensive attitude. I presume that I have been called here to pursue the same system, and to lead you against the enemy. It is my purpose to do so and that speedily. I am sure you long for the opportunity to win the distinction you are capable of achieving. That opportunity I shall endeavor to give you. Meanwhile, I desire you to dismiss from your minds certain phrases I am sorry to find so much in vogue amongst you. I hear constantly of taking strong positions and holding them, of lines of retreat, and of bases of supplies. Let us

discard such ideas. The strongest position a soldier should desire to occupy is one from which he can most easily advance against the enemy. Let us study the probable lines of retreat of our opponents and leave our own to take care of themselves. Let us look before us, and not behind. Success and glory are in advance, disaster and shame lurk in the rear. Let us act on this understanding, and it is safe to predict that your banner shall be inscribed with many a glorious deed and that your names will be dear to your countryman forever.”<sup>13</sup>

This speech was designed to irritate McClellan as well as to show the totality that the Union was taking towards the war. Secretary Stanton dictated the argumentative passages of the speech. He wrote these passages to test the public reaction to a total war. Despite criticism that his speech was designed to provoke McClellan, to compare the victories and failures of the eastern and western theaters; and the resolve of the Union, Pope accepted responsibility for the speech.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, Pope produced several general orders which governed the conduct of Union troops in the field. The Army of Virginia was ordered to live off the land by requisitioning supplies locally and paying for these supplies with vouchers from the treasury. General Order Seven levied a series of fines, indemnities and impressed service upon civilians living within a five mile radius of communications severed by guerilla forces or houses from which Union soldiers were fired upon. Further insult to Confederates was General Order Eleven. This general order allowed Union commanders to deport any male that would not swear an oath of allegiance to the Union. If an individual was deported and returned, he could be put to death for spying. President Lincoln and northern newspapers approved of these orders, while the Confederates

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<sup>13</sup> O.R. XII, Pt. 3, 473-474.

<sup>14</sup> On 22 July, in a letter to his wife, McClellan stated “. . . I see that the Pope bubble is likely to be suddenly collapsed . . . the young man who wanted to teach me the art of war will in less than a week either be in full retreat or badly whipped.” & Jacob D. Cox, *Military Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 2 vols. (New York, 1900), 1:222.

thought they were barbarous. *Lee* was quoted as calling Pope a “miscreant” and specifically telling *Jackson* “I want Pope suppressed.”<sup>15</sup>

Halleck arrived in Washington, met with President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton and Pope and discussed the options that were available in the eastern theater. No real decision came about from this meeting and Halleck went to Harrison’s Landing to discuss the situation with McClellan. Believing *Lee* had 200,000 troops in and around Richmond, McClellan would not resume his attack upon Richmond without an additional 25-50,000 reinforcements. Halleck left McClellan, deciding that the Army of the Potomac must be withdrawn from Harrison’s Landing and combined with the Army of Virginia.

President Lincoln ordered McClellan to withdraw from Harrison’s Landing and combine with the Army of Virginia in and around Washington. The Army of Virginia would guard the approaches to Washington and if attacked would fight a delaying action to enable McClellan’s forces to successfully combine with the Army of Virginia. If there was no movement of the Confederates north, Pope would threaten Gordonsville and Charlottesville in order to draw the enemy away from Richmond and McClellan’s army. Additionally, Pope was ordered by Halleck to maintain communications with Fredericksburg and to ensure the meeting of both armies.<sup>16</sup> Despite the discussions between President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton, Halleck and Pope, the original order creating the Army of Virginia and directing it “in the speediest manner attack and overcome the rebel forces under *Jackson* and *Ewell*” had not been rescinded.<sup>17</sup> Pope ordered his three corps to converge on Sperryville, the gateway to the Shenandoah Valley

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<sup>15</sup> O.R. XII, part 3:918.

<sup>16</sup>Pope, Final Report, OR XII, part 2:23.



and once gathered en masse the combined army would move towards Culpeper. This movement, in addition to protecting the approaches to Washington, was designed to lure *Lee's* forces away from Richmond allowing the Army of the Potomac to withdraw without intervention.

Pope reviewed his forces and became familiar with his commanders during the first week of August. He administratively combined all his cavalry units into a corps, headed by a General Benjamin Roberts. Despite his previously successful experimentation with a consolidated cavalry in Missouri, Pope maintained cavalry subordination to each corps. Although Pope used the cavalry as an intelligence collection asset; he did not receive timely reports from them. After Verdiersville, described below, Colonel Buford was tasked with providing reconnaissance near Louisa Court House. Buford regularly sent reports to McDowell on the size and status of Longstreet's force. However, these reports did not arrive to Pope in a timely manner. The unremitting movement of the Union cavalry combined with a lack of sufficient forage, resulted in the 5,000 total cavalry assigned being reduced to an effective force of 500 by 29 August.

On 06 August, the Army of Virginia started its movement towards Culpeper, searching out *Jackson* all the while maintaining communications with Fredericksburg, as ordered by Halleck. With the Army of Virginia spread out between Sperryville and Culpeper, a distance of nearly 20 miles, Confederate forces were probing north in an attempt to find the Army of Virginia. On 08 August, *Jackson's* force met Pope's at Cedar Mountain.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Order Constituting the Army of Virginia, Executive Mansion, June 26, 1862, OR XII, part 3:435.

<sup>18</sup> Estimated at 22,000: Jackson's division with 8,000, Ewell's with 6,000 and a mixed force of A.P Hill's Division and the Second Brigade, Louisiana Volunteers with 8,000.

Pope's initial order to Banks was given verbally to Colonel Lewis Marshall, a member of his staff. The verbal order, transcribed by request from Banks, stated "...move to the front immediately, assume command of all forces in the front, deploy his [Banks] skirmishers if the enemy advances, and attack him immediately as he approaches, and be reinforced from here."<sup>19</sup> Roberts, sent by Pope to designate what terrain would be held, reminded Banks that Pope wanted only a holding action. Banks confirmed the order to conduct a holding action before the Committee on the Conduct of the War in 1864.

Despite this confirmation, Banks argued that Roberts had urged him to attack. Despite Roberts denial, the dispatch was written in such a manner that it should have been understood that Banks should take up a position, deploy skirmishers, and should the enemy approach, attack with the skirmishers while delaying as long as possible. After putting his troops in motion, Banks met with Pope who told him that he had dispatched Roberts to designate what ground was to be held.<sup>20</sup> Reinforcements would arrive from Culpeper, where Pope's headquarters were located. While the tactical folly rests solely with Banks, blame should also be placed upon Pope for not making himself clearer by writing his order down vice a verbal order that was then interpreted by the messenger.

Despite being outnumbered nearly two to one, II Corps drove the Confederates back nearly a mile before *Jackson's* reserve force was pushed forward, rallying the Confederates and forcing II Corps back behind Cedar Run Creek.<sup>21</sup> Upon hearing the growing crescendo of artillery fire, Pope ordered Sigel's I Corps to hurry to the fighting.

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<sup>19</sup> Colonel Lewis Marshall, Culpeper, 9:45 AM, August 9, 1862. John Codman Ropes, *The Army Under Pope* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881) p 20-21.

<sup>20</sup> Ropes, 21.

Pope also rode to the front and witnessed the stabilization of the retreat with the arrival of I Corps. II Corps fell back with over 2,300 casualties compared to 1,300 Confederate casualties. Pope felt II Corps was rendered unusable as a fighting unit, and it was subsequently assigned to rear guard duty. In addition to the loss of life, the possibility of massing forces against a smaller Confederate force under *Jackson* was foiled. *Jackson* and Pope viewed Cedar Mountain a draw and neither wished to continue fighting.

As *Jackson* maneuvered his force south of the Rapidan River, Pope slowly followed. General Rufus King's 1st Division of III Corps marched down the Rappahannock from Fredericksburg and met with the rest of the Army of Virginia on 11 August. On 14 August, two divisions of General Burnside's IX Corps also arrived from Fredericksburg.<sup>22</sup> Pope relied upon reinforcements from the Army of the Potomac that McClellan was reluctant to provide.

To determine if the Confederates were advancing against his left, as he theorized, Pope ordered parts of Buford's cavalry across the Rapidan River to watch the approaches from Louisa Court House and Hanover Junction toward the Rapidan River.<sup>23</sup> Buford's cavalry surprised *General J. E. B. Stuart* at Verdierville, capturing not only his hat and cloak but also satchels with orders detailing the Confederate plan for destroying the Army of Virginia. With information gleamed from spies along with the captured orders, Pope retreated to the Rappahannock River. Halleck rightfully supported Pope's decision

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<sup>21</sup> General Banks thought he faced only *General Jackson's* division of 8,000 instead of the combined Confederate force of approximately 22,000.

<sup>22</sup> Totalling 8,000 troops under Generals Isaac I. Stevens and Jesse L. Reno.

<sup>23</sup> O.R., XII, Pt.3, 589-590.

to retreat requesting him “to stand firm on that line until I can help you. Fight hard, and aid will soon come.”<sup>24</sup>

The aid that Halleck spoke of was very slow in coming. The last troops of McClellan’s left Harrison’s Landing on 13 August, ten days after Halleck issued the order and nine from when McClellan actually received it. Halleck issued dispatches of reproof, while McClellan responded with excuses as to how his forces were moving as fast as could be carried out. On the night of 18 August, through sheer happenstance as Pope moved his forces back across the Rappahannock River, *Lee* had directed his army to rest and make ready to move at dawn, on 20 August. When *Lee* awoke on 19 August, Pope’s forces were gone, heading towards the Rappahannock River.

Throughout 20 August, the Confederates tested the fords and crossings along the Rappahannock, probing to see where the Union right ended. While these probes provided information to *Lee*, they also provided information to Pope. Pope determined that *Lee* was massing his forces in front of and to the right of Pope’s forces. He professed that we “shall make the best fight we can.”<sup>25</sup> Pope’s retrograde and counters to *Lee*’s movements had been very successful.

Throughout 24 August, Pope and *Jackson* engaged each other’s forces at Waterloo Bridge and Sulphur Springs. As the engagement progressed, Pope looked to Halleck for guidance. Pope felt he had two options available. The first was to fall back behind the Cedar Run, joining with Heintzelman’s Corps to defend in the positions offered by Cedar Run. The other option, and the one that Halleck accepted, was for Pope to attack across the Rappahannock Bridge and Kelly’s Ford and then turn north to “. . .

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<sup>24</sup> O.R. XII, Pt. 3, 591.

<sup>25</sup> O.R. XII, Pt. 3, 612-613.

assail the enemy's flank and rear."<sup>26</sup> This plan did not come to fruition as August rains washed away Kelly's Ford and the Rappahannock Bridge.

*Lee*, using maneuver, attempted to outflank Pope (see map 1). *Jackson* was ordered to go further to the north and around the Union right, through White Plains, via the Manassas Gap Railroad, through Bristoe Station and into Manassas Junction in order to sever Popes communications. This flank march thoroughly confused Pope and Halleck. Halleck, on 25 August, ordered Pope to determine if *Jackson* was moving into the Shenandoah Valley. Pope responded that he had lost contact with Jackson and could not determine where he was heading. Pope's actions to determine the destination of *Jackson's* force were contrary to what should have been ordered. Instead of sending out forces to the right to reestablish contact with *Jackson* where he was last seen heading, Pope extended his lines towards the left. Pope sent word to Halleck that he felt *Jackson's* force was "moving toward Front Royal and Thornton's Gap."<sup>27</sup>

Even with reports of large numbers of Confederates going through White Plains and clearing Thoroughfare Gap, Pope did not react. *Jackson* drove into Bristoe Station and then turned towards Manassas Junction where many tons of Union supplies were lightly defended.<sup>28</sup> In a post-battle report, months after the battle, Pope stated that he had taken ample measures to protect his army's rear, although orders he claimed to have issued were never found nor were they corroborated with any other personnel. In light of this information, one could question Pope's acceptance of responsibility for the Union failure at Bull Run.

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<sup>26</sup> O.R. XII Pt. 2, 59.

<sup>27</sup> O.R., XII, Pt. 3, 625.

<sup>28</sup> Rear area security consisted of six infantry companies, three each for Bristoe Station and Manassas Junction, along with a single artillery battery and a green cavalry regiment.

## **Bull Run – 28 August 1862**

### **“We shall bag the whole crowd”**

- General John Pope

At 2100 on 27 August, Pope issued orders that had 50,000 soldiers converge on Manassas the following morning in an attempt to trap *Jackson's* divisions, of the *Army of Northern Virginia* (see map 2). General Phil Kearny was to march at the “earliest blush of dawn” through Bristoe and then to Manassas. General Fitz-John Porter, when he arrived at Bristoe, would support Kearny. Reno, northwest of Manassas Junction, was to march directly to Manassas Junction. The Corps’ of McDowell and Sigel constituted the most important aspect of the attack. Sigel’s Corps was to align itself with the Manassas Gap Railroad, near Gainesville, on its right. McDowell’s Corps was to align itself to the left of Sigel’s Corps. Both Corps would then march on Manassas from the north.

Pope’s plan was solid as long as *Jackson* did not move and all the planned activities went flawlessly. Execution of the plan was anything but flawless. Pope assumed that *Jackson* would wait at Manassas consuming the rations that they had just captured. Pope did not visualize *Jackson* moving the Confederate forces out during the night, which Jackson did. Had the Union cavalry not been poorly located, 15 miles away at Warrenton, and in pitiful condition, it could have observed the movements of *Jackson's* force. Had the cavalry been in better condition and properly positioned it could also have delayed the Confederate movements out of Manassas and harm’s way.<sup>29</sup>

Pope failed to consider where *Longstreet's*<sup>30</sup> forces were and he failed to properly allocate any forces to halt, delay or locate them, despite knowing that a large Confederate

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<sup>29</sup> John J. Hennessy, *Return to Bull Run*, (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1993), p. 139-141.

<sup>30</sup> Longstreet’s force consisted of over 30,000 troops.

force was approaching. Pope confidently felt “that we were sufficiently in advance of *Longstreet*...that by using our whole force vigorously we should be able to crush *Jackson* completely before *Longstreet* could have reached the scene of action.”<sup>31</sup> Pope’s subordinate commanders did not share the same thought or conviction about *Longstreet* and the tempo with which the Confederate forces were moving to link up with *General Jackson’s* force. McDowell was receiving regular reports from Buford’s cavalry brigade, operating along *Longstreet’s* left flank. These reports made it known that *Longstreet’s* force would be able to transit through Thoroughfare Gap by midday on 29 August. McDowell contemplated the force he would send to delay or completely stop *Longstreet* and he decided to send all of Sigel’s Corps and Reynolds’s Division to Haymarket and Gainesville. This positioning would allow both to move to Thoroughfare Gap should *Longstreet* attempt to push through. Just prior to these forces commencing the movement, Pope’s orders for a converging of all Union forces on Manassas arrived.

Despite the assuredness of Pope’s orders, McDowell decided to leave Rickett’s Division<sup>32</sup> behind to contend with stopping or slowing the Confederates. While McDowell’s decision to leave behind a division to prevent *Longstreet* pushing through Thoroughfare Gap was strategically well thought, he weakened this decision by keeping Rickett’s division near Haymarket with the orders to “march to resist” any Confederate advance through the gap. This order did not allow Ricketts to effectively stop or slow *Longstreet* in a timely manner, since it allowed *Longstreet* to secure Thoroughfare Gap prior to any Union force engaging the Confederates. This was validated by *Longstreet’s* force reaching Thoroughfare Gap, and after a hard battle gaining control of the pass.

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<sup>31</sup> O.R. XII, Pt. 3, p. 688; Pt. 1, p. 205.

<sup>32</sup> Rickett’s division consisted of over 5,000 troops.

The movement of Union forces from the beginning was poor. Sigel did not commence moving his forces at the directed time. Instead he decided to consolidate his entire force before moving. A result of this delay was that McDowell's Corps was unable to start moving. Reno and Porter's Corps failed to arrive when expected. Reno's Corps arrived many hours later than expected. Porter's Corps did not have any affect on any actions until the afternoon of 29 August when lead echelons of his and *Longstreet's* force met. Pope failed to ensnare *Jackson* as a result of failure of Union forces to move coupled with poor assumptions on Pope's part and *Jackson* moving his forces out of Manassas even while the order to "bag the whole crowd" was being issued.

While Pope still believed *Jackson* was at Manassas, *Jackson* was busy trying to find and engage Pope in combat, but on his own terms. *Jackson's* worst scenarios were Pope's force engaging his when he was not prepared for it or Pope retreating to the defenses at Centreville. *Jackson* positioned himself north of the Warrenton Turnpike in the woods near Groveton. He would wait until he could hopefully ambush the Army of Virginia.

Three things added to the problems of the Union forces. The first problem was that Pope still believed *Jackson* was at Manassas. The second problem was that McDowell and Sigel did not start their movement until well after their prescribed time. The third problem was that through a misunderstanding, Sigel's force-marched south down the Orange and Alexandria Railroad in order to attack Manassas.<sup>33</sup> With Sigel proceeding south, McDowell moved east down the Warrenton Turnpike. After a brief skirmish with Confederate cavalry, McDowell personally reconnoitered the area and

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<sup>33</sup> O.R. XII, Pt. 1, p. 145..



determined that *Jackson's* force was not in the area. He resumed the march east down Warrenton Turnpike towards Manassas.

With the arrival of Union forces at Manassas, now a smoldering ex-Union supply facility came the realization that *Jackson's* force was not there. Shortly after arriving at Manassas, word arrived that *Longstreet* had made it to Thoroughfare Gap. Pope was confused about the options that were presented to him. Offensively, he had the options of moving against *Longstreet* at Thoroughfare Gap and delaying him, which would allow him to continue to find and attack *Jackson* since he was isolated from *Longstreet*, or he could pursue *Jackson* and not worry about *Longstreet* pushing through Thoroughfare Gap. Through poor judgment, Pope disregarded the threat that *Longstreet* presented and concentrated on attempting to “bag” *Jackson*. Pope ordered McDowell to move down the Warrenton Turnpike to Centreville where Pope mistakenly thought *Jackson* was located.<sup>34</sup>

McDowell's' force, as it marched east down the Warrenton Turnpike, came under the direct purview of *Jackson*, who immediately summed up the situation that presented itself and ordered “Bring out your men, gentlemen!”<sup>35</sup> Horrific fighting took place between the Union and Confederate forces resulting in significant losses to both sides (see map 3). As the night wore on, King, whose division had just engaged *Jackson's* force, received reports from prisoners estimating *Jackson* as having 60,000 to 70,000 soldiers. King convened his brigade commanders, who through consensus, decided “...Our position is not tenable, and we shall fall back toward Manassas...”<sup>36</sup> Pope

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<sup>34</sup> Hennessey, 163-4. McDowell after issuing the orders to move towards Centreville, decided to find Pope and discuss the implications of the situation.

<sup>35</sup> Blackford, *War Years*, p 120-121.

<sup>36</sup> O.R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 384, 717-718.

watched the battle from high ground east of Blackburn's Ford on Bull Run. With the arrival of messengers from King, Pope believed that King had caught *Jackson* retreating from Centreville and stood between *Jackson* and "the main body of the enemy" i.e. *Longstreet*.<sup>37</sup>

Disregarding the indications of *Longstreet's* arrival, Pope neglected to move to Centreville and Washington to await reinforcement from McClellan, subsequently failing to "...protect[ing] western Virginia and Washington..." Pope did choose to "...in the speediest manner attack and overcome the rebel forces under *Jackson*..."<sup>38</sup> Pope ordered Kearny to move down Warrenton Turnpike at 0100, "drive in the enemy's pickets tonight, and at early dawn attack vigorously."<sup>39</sup> Kearny disregarded these orders and told the messenger to "Tell General Pope to go to Hell. We won't march before morning."<sup>40</sup>

Sigel received the order to "attack the enemy vigorously" at daylight.<sup>41</sup> General Joseph E. Hooker near Bull Run, Reno near Manassas, and Porter at Bristoe Station were ordered to march northeast towards Centreville, then west along the Warrenton Turnpike. While these movements were designed to direct the chase of *Jackson* away from Washington, they also resulted in attacking *Jackson* on his ground on and his own terms. Pope could not go back on his initial promise of "Success and glory are in the advance, disaster and shame lurk in the rear" as it would show that he was weak.<sup>42</sup>

All the orders Pope gave the night of 28 August were based upon his faulty perception of *Jackson* and his force locations. King was already retreating down the

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<sup>37</sup> O.R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 206.

<sup>38</sup> Order Constituting the Army of Virginia, Executive Mansion, June 26, 1862, OR XII, part 3:435.

<sup>39</sup> O.R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 74-75..

<sup>40</sup> A. E. Voglebach to Porter, 22 August, 1878, Porter Papers, Library of Congress

<sup>41</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 266, 393.

<sup>42</sup> Pope's Address "To the Officers and Soldiers of the Army of Virginia," 14 July 1862.

Warrenton Turnpike towards Manassas when Pope issued orders to hold in position. In addition, General John Reynolds and Sigel's commands were southeast of *Jackson*, not west as Pope had assumed. By poorly positioning his forces, Pope left open a northwesterly escape route for the Confederates and was helpless in preventing a link-up between *Jackson* and *Longstreet's* Corps'.

## **Bull Run – 29 August 1862**

**“Be expeditious or we shall lose much.”**

- General John Pope

With the rising sun, came the realization that Pope's plan was not executed as he had envisioned it the night before. Before Pope had issued his orders to hold in front of *Jackson*, King's division had already retreated. Rickett's division had fallen back from Thoroughfare Gap. Pope blamed McDowell for the failure of his plan since McDowell was unable to control the retreat of his forces.<sup>43</sup> In order to counter this failure, Pope ordered King<sup>44</sup> to return to his previous position and also ordered Porter's V Corps to converge on Gainesville. Pope felt he was ordering a two-pronged pincer movement designed to track, stalk and kill a retreating *Jackson*. He did not think that he was sending his forces to fight a well-prepared and well-positioned defender on terrain of the defenders choice. In reality, Pope was sending Sigel's I Corps to attack *Jackson's* dug in troops. I Corps had been involved in combat only two times previous to the encounter on 29 August, both times being defeated by *Jackson*. Focusing on the destruction of *Jackson*, Pope completely disregarded the presence of *Longstreet's* force at Thoroughfare Gap.

Through reconnoitering, Sigel determined that *Jackson* was positioned north of the Warrenton Turnpike throughout the woods in considerable, yet undetermined strength. To attempt to determine *Jackson's* location and strength, Sigel decided to attack across a two-mile front. Sigel asked Reynolds to join the 2-mile long frontal attack

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<sup>43</sup> McDowell had gone looking for Pope the night before. McDowell was with Porter when he received his orders to move towards Gainesville. Upon reading these orders, McDowell realized that he was essentially without a command. He sent a message to Pope protesting the “new” command relationship and stalled Porter, hoping to find out if Pope would change the command relationship.

in an attempt to determine *Jackson's* location and strength. Reynolds initially refused until he received permission from McDowell, his own corps commander. The frontal attack against *Jackson's* entrenched troops commenced, with engaging Union forces committed piecemeal throughout the day.

Sigel's battlefield awareness became heightened by the piecemeal attacks across the front. These early morning attacks allowed Sigel to determine the relative position of *Jackson's* forces and perceived weakness (see map 4). Sigel decided to commit Kearny's division, of Heintzelman's Corps, along the Union right (Confederate left). Hooker's division, of Heintzelman's Corps, would be utilized as a reserve force to support the middle of the Union line of battle.

The battle along the extreme right of the Union forces was vicious. Schurz's division would charge and be knocked back with large losses. The Confederates pursued the retreating Union forces, but met resistance from Union artillery that stopped their advance. Sigel ordered Schurz to re-attack *Jackson*. In addition to Sigel's order, Schurz received a copy of Sigel's request to Kearny that asked for a coordinated attack along *Jackson's* left. Schurz committed his forces while awaiting Kearny's divisional attack. "On my right...all remained quiet, and it became quite clear to me that he [Kearny] had not followed [Sigel's] request to attack simultaneously with me."<sup>45</sup>

Kearny's division did not effectively enter into the incursion Schurz's forces were involved in. For almost three hours, Kearny's division proceeded to move yet never attempted to accomplish any objectives that Sigel or Heintzelman had given. In fact, Kearny actually maneuvered away from the sound of Schurz's engaged division.

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<sup>44</sup> King, recovering from a seizure the previous night, turned over command of his division to Brigadier General John Hatch, the cavalry commander who bungled the cavalry raid on Gordonsville on 27 July.

Eventually, they crossed Bull Run, near Sudley Ford. *Jackson* whose rear area was several hundred yards away from the crossing point, hastily dispatched a Confederate force. Confederate fire drove Kearny's forces back. Had Kearny followed the direct orders from superior officers, as Schurz described in his official report "we might have succeeded in destroying the enemy's left wing, and thus gained decisive results before *Longstreet's* arrival."<sup>46</sup> The reason for Kearny's insubordination was his dislike of Sigel. Sigel had previously exposed to the press a letter written by Kearny describing the poor quality of German-American soldiers. Couple this incident with Kearny's failure to move on Pope's orders and you see utter contempt for superiors assigned over him. Kearny probably avoided a court-martial for failing to follow orders only through his death several days later at Chantilly.

Sigel perceived the morning battle as going according to plan. *Jackson's* force was held in clearly defined positions. As the day progressed, more and more Union troops arrived. Sigel poorly dispatched arriving forces to the front. He maneuvered the forces without regard to corps organization. An example was his employment of the brigades of Reno's Corps being sent to five separate areas. At 1300, the battlefield was turned over to Pope who enjoyed witnessing the "retreating" *Jackson* held to a standstill while more Union troops became available.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the morning, forces of *Longstreet* were approaching from Thoroughfare Gap (see map 5). At 1000, the link up between *Jackson* and *Longstreet* was realized, however, it would be several hours before the forces of *Longstreet* were properly positioned. Porter's Corps was approaching *Longstreet's* force along the

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<sup>45</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 298.

<sup>46</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 2, 268, 298.

Manassas–Gainesville Road when it encountered the Confederate Cavalry under *Stuart*. *Stuart*, realizing the potential threat of Porter’s Corps to *Longstreet’s* force, committed skirmishers as a blocking force in addition to resorting to operational deception to counter Porter’s advance. A dust cloud created by dragging cut brush behind cavalry deceived Porter enough that *Lee* was able to deploy a brigade in front of Porter. As Porter’s lead brigade engaged the Confederate blocking force he and McDowell<sup>48</sup> received the Joint Order from Pope. The Joint Order stated:

“You will please move forward with your joint commands towards Gainesville ... Heintzelman, Sigel, and Reno are moving on the Warrenton Turnpike, and must now be not far from Gainesville. I desire that as soon as communication is established between this force and your own, the whole command shall halt. It may be necessary to fall back behind Bull Run to Centreville to-night. ...

If any considerable advantages are to be gained by departing from this order, it will not be strictly carried out. One thing must be had in view, that the troops must occupy a position from which they can reach Bull Run tonight or by morning.”<sup>49</sup>

Shortly after receiving the Joint Order, McDowell received a report, written at 0900 by Buford, giving the size and location of *Longstreet’s* force: “Seventeen regiments, one battery, and five hundred cavalry passed through Gainesville three-quarters of an hour ago, on the Centreville road.”<sup>50</sup> This report on the disposition of *Longstreet’s* force was not new to McDowell, since he had been receiving regular reports from Buford. Porter viewed this report and the rising dust cloud in front of his force to indicate that *Longstreet’s* force was directly in front of his.

McDowell, with permission from Pope to regain command of Hatch’s and Rickett’s divisions, left Porter with the promise that he [McDowell] would move up on

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<sup>47</sup> Pope still felt that *Jackson* was attempting to retreat from Union forces.

<sup>48</sup> Traveling alone, McDowell had left his command to find Pope and had met with and joined with Porter.

<sup>49</sup> Pope to McDowell and Porter, 29 August, 1862, OR XII, part 2:76.

<sup>50</sup> Buford’s cavalry brigade was acting as rearguard for Rickett’s division in its retreat from Centreville to Bristoe.

the left of Reynolds and Sigel and link with Porter's right.<sup>51</sup> With the departure of McDowell, Porter initially attempted to move to the right to link up with Pope's main body, somewhere near Groveton. Porter sent a brigade to find a route to do this, however, it returned shortly with the explanation that obstructions blocked their path. Porter decided to deploy artillery while also sending out a strong line of skirmishers and stay in the position he currently occupied. Porter's presence along the right flank of *Longstreet* kept *Lee* and *Longstreet* from effectively moving their force until later in the day. Porter's choice to stay where he was located, while authorized under the Joint Order issued by Pope, was not the choice that Pope would have made. Porter's lack of movement, despite hearing battle all day long, led Pope to prosecute Porter at a court martial for willfully disobeying orders.

Pope took the battlefield satisfied with the situation that he thought was before him. *Jackson* had remained in the positions he occupied the previous day. This allowed Sigel, Heintzelman and Reno to continue to fix *Jackson* in place, while Porter and McDowell's forces attacked *Jackson's* flank and possibly rear. The problem with Pope's plan was twofold, Porter's route was blocked and the Joint Order did not specifically order him to attack *Jackson*.

While waiting for the hammer blow of McDowell and Porter, Pope the anvil, distracted *Jackson* by attacking along the front shared with him (see map 6). With the aid of General Hooker, Pope decided to conduct a coordinated movement between Kearny and Hooker's divisions. Kearny's division would conduct a flank attack along the Confederate left while Hooker conducted a frontal assault. In theory this sounded like a

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<sup>51</sup> McDowell did not remember this promise once he arrived on the field. McDowell also failed to remember to forward Buford's message to Pope. McDowell did not remember the message until 1900 that



solid plan. The problem was in the execution of it. The lead brigade, under Brigadier General Grover, utilized the wooded terrain to conceal his attack. Grover's attack surprised the Confederates, who yielded their line along an uncompleted railroad. Kearny's expected supporting attack moved slowly and cautiously, counter to what Grover and Hooker anticipated and knew was necessary. Fatigue of Grover's troops, Kearny's mistimed and slow supporting attack coupled with a Confederate counterattack, reversed Grover's gains.<sup>52</sup>

In order to keep *Jackson* engaged, Pope attacked his right flank with General Reynolds Pennsylvania Reserves despite receiving word from Reynolds that a strong Confederate presence was south of the Warrenton Turnpike. Reynolds ordered two of his brigades forward, where they were immediately assailed by Confederate fire. As the intensity of the fire increased, Reynolds decided to stop the attack and move his troops back to safety. Reynolds sent an officer to Pope to describe how strong the opposition was and what waited beyond the Union line. "You are excited, young man; the people you see are General Porter's command taking position on the right of the enemy." Pope replied. He chose to ignore this report, disregarding it as over estimation and inexperience of the reporting officer.

To maintain the distraction of *Jackson*, Pope ordered Hooker to attack the center (see map 7). Colonel James Nagle led the brigade that did so, and, like Grover's brigade, was able to punch through the Confederate lines yet could not sustain the drive due to a lack of support. Nagle fell back as reinforcements finally came forward. This battle

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same night.

<sup>52</sup> Brigadier General Robinson's brigade of Kearny's division.

continued to swell in size with the Confederates repulsing the Union forces. The Confederates did not pursue.

As the hours of the day and the multiple attacks that Pope ordered ground to a halt, Pope grew more and more agitated with Porter and his inability to follow orders. Pope tightened his front, while also maintaining contact with Reynolds division south of Groveton by allowing McDowell to bridge the gap between the main force of Pope and Reynolds division. Pope issued further orders to Porter. “Your line of march brings you on the enemy’s right flank. I desire you to push forward into action at once on the enemy’s flank, and, if possible, on his rear, keeping your right in communication with General Reynolds ... In case you are obliged to fall back, do so to your right and rear.”

With the demise of the attack upon the center of Jackson’s force by Nagle’s brigade, Pope decided to re-attack the right wing of the Confederates with Kearny’s division (see map 8). Kearny committed eight regiments, with an additional two in reserve, and three batteries providing direct support. Brigadier General Birney’s regiment drove into the Confederate front.<sup>53</sup> Through heavy fighting and determination, Birney’s regiment pressed forward into the Confederate forces. As Birney’s attack began to peter out, Kearny failed to commit any of the reserve regiments he had at his disposal. Instead, he found the brigade of Colonel Leisure which he threw into action to support and reinforce the attack. Despite the initial success of this force, it too was driven back prior to reinforcements arriving.

By 1830, seven of Longstreet’s twelve brigades were ready to move out to conduct a reconnaissance in force in order to better position themselves for the next day’s battle. Around the same time, Pope received word that Confederate forces were moving

on the Warrenton Turnpike. Pope and his Chief of Staff, George Ruggles, viewed the wagons themselves. Pope believed that the Confederates were retreating from the direction of Sudley Springs. Ruggles disagreed, feeling that Confederate wounded from the days previous fighting were being brought to the rear. Pope decided to pursue the retreating Confederates. Brigadier General Hatch's brigade, of McDowell's division, was ordered to pursue the retreating force. As Hatch's brigade quickened their move to catch the fleeing Confederates, they crested the ridge overlooking Groveton (see map 9).<sup>54</sup> Immediately below, four regiments of *Colonel Law's* brigade rushed up the grade of the ridge. In addition to *Law's* regiments, regiments from *Brigadier General Hood's* brigade also joined the assault up the ridge. Despite the impending disparate combat, Hatch continued to fight with his forces.<sup>55</sup> The fighting was fierce, and in the failing light many formations of men became confused and entangled with each other. In one instance, Major Livingston, of the 76<sup>th</sup> New York tried to rally what he thought was a Union regiment retreating. The unit he was trying to rally was a Confederate regiment that took him prisoner.

As the episode between Hatch, *Laws* and *Hood* came to a conclusion, Pope met with McDowell on Buck Hill. At this time, McDowell finally presented the dispatch from Buford that described the composition of a large force, parts of the same force that Hatch had just battled. While Pope correctly deduced that *Longstreet* had arrived and was engaged by Hatch, he failed to deduce what *Lee's* intent was for *Longstreet's* force. Pope inaccurately presumed that *Lee* would utilize *Longstreet* to

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<sup>53</sup> Colonel Leisure's brigade consisted of two regiments of troops.

<sup>54</sup> Uberto Burnhum. MS "2d Day at Bull Run," Burnham Papers; Hamer, TS "One Man's War," p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> Hatch had sent Captain Judson back to McDowell to explain the situation, hoping that McDowell would rescind the order to pursue. McDowell responded by telling Hatch to continue to fight.

bolster *Jackson's* position north of the Warrenton Turnpike. He did not grasp that *Longstreet* was used to extend Jackson's front nearly a mile south. Pope was unable to fathom the intentions of *Lee, Longstreet* and *Jackson*. Pope based his plans on the Confederates course of action that was most advantageous to him. Pope became focused on "bagging" *Jackson*. He lost sight of what potential the Confederates had arrayed against the Union. In addition to the dispatch from Buford, McDowell delivered a dispatch from Porter which stated that he was unable to push through toward the Warrenton Turnpike, had to withdraw, was out of water and provisions and had lost a few men from firing.<sup>56</sup> The receipt of this dispatch hardened Pope's view of Porter. Porter's lack of action validated Pope's pre-conceived notion of Porter's support for McClellan and his perceived attempt to interfere with the success of Pope. Despite the action that entailed throughout the day, Pope still felt that the Union had accomplished something. The Union forces had held their own against Jackson, despite piecemeal, disjointed attacks. That night, after the day's battle concluded, Pope met with his commanders and decided to do nothing until morning when he would reassess the situation.

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<sup>56</sup> Hennessey, 306.

### **Bull Run – 30 August 1862**

**“War has been designated as Hell, and I can assure you that where the Regiment stood that day was the very vortex of Hell”**

-Unknown member of the 5<sup>th</sup> New York at a monument dedication

As the first rays of the rising sun illuminated the sky, Union artillery forces on Dogan Ridge, commanded by General Patrick, sighted and then fired upon the Confederate forces that were just starting to maneuver away from the Union artillery pieces. Patrick reported the movements to McDowell, who then reported it to Pope. This report, in addition to other reports of Confederate troops retreating, added to the misinformation that Pope had already absorbed and based his previous orders upon. At 0700, Pope called his commanders together to come to a decision as to what should be done. Pope accepted a plan to attack *Jackson's* left again. Despite the agreement of Pope's generals, only verbal orders were issued to McDowell to conduct the attack.

Shortly after the council concluded Porter and the initial echelon of his forces arrived in the area. Porter met with Pope and discussed the situation he had experienced the previous day and how it related to Confederate positions. Pope disregarded Porter's comments due to a loss of confidence in his ability and allegiance. Reynolds attempted to support Porter, but he too was disregarded since he had previously served under Porter and in Pope's mind, could no longer be trusted. In defense of Pope, Porter had done nothing to either identify or quantify the Confederate forces arrayed against him and the information he presented to Pope was over 12 hours old.

As the morning continued, Porter maneuvered in front of Dogan Ridge. Realizing a Union force was necessary south of the Warrenton Turnpike, Reynolds moved his division north towards Groveton. At 0900, Pope ordered Rickett's division to replace Kearny's division. This movement drew the attention of the Confederates who opened

fire. Rickett's reported back to Pope, via McDowell, that the Confederates were not retreating, that they were in force and menacing. Pope reconsidered his original order and replied "No, damn it. Let him go!"<sup>57</sup> Despite this report of continued Confederate presence, Pope remained adamant about the intentions of the Confederates. Brigadier General Stevens rode to Pope and explained how the Confederates still held the unfinished railroad in strength and were not retreating. With conflicting reports about Confederate intentions, Pope was confused and between 0800 and 1130 he issued no orders.

Pope finally made a decision, based on the report of a Union soldier sent back by Porter. The soldier reportedly spent the night behind enemy lines and had overheard the rebel officers say their army was retiring to unite with *Longstreet*. Porter felt the Confederates were trying to draw the Union into the Groveton Woods where they waited. Despite this warning, Pope issued a written order to the entire army. Two prongs, one led by Porter supported by Hatch and Reynolds' divisions, would advance along the Warrenton Turnpike, and the other consisting of Heintzelman's Corps and Ricketts' Division would attack along the Sudley to Haymarket road. Pope placed McDowell in command of this two-pronged attack. Pope failed to rescind the verbal order he had given to Porter. This failure on Pope's part had further implications as the attack progressed. Porter would be unable to lead the first prong as he had already engaged the Confederates at Groveton Woods.

Four distinct events forced Pope to finally comprehend that *Jackson* was not retreating. (1) Rickett's force was stopped in the north. (2) Porter became engaged with a formidable force in the center. (3) Reynolds was challenged at Groveton. (4) Sigel

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<sup>57</sup> Eby, ed., *Strother Diaries*, p. 94-95.

confirmed the presence of Confederate forces, en masse, that were moving against the left of the Union forces. Pope was dumbstruck when Reynolds reported that the Union left was being turned. Not believing Reynolds, Pope dispatched Buford's cavalry to find the truth. McDowell also rode out to investigate the situation. Despite no record of what McDowell saw, his investigation stirred him so much he moved Reynolds Division to Chinn Ridge. Despite the differing intelligence being received Pope still held reservations about the Confederates attacking. He decided to attack *Jackson* again, this time on the right with all of Porter's Corps, supported by Sigel's Corps and Hatch's Division, if necessary.

With what seems like standard Union coordination during Bull Run, as Porter began his attack he twice requested to McDowell for help from Sigel's Corps (see map 10). McDowell did not answer the first request but forwarded the second request to Sigel. Sigel, who was under direct leadership of Pope, disregarded the request and deployed his Corps along Dogan Ridge. Sigel's movement withdrew a supporting formation from Porter's attack. Porter and Hatch started the attack at 1430. The Confederate response was steady and devastating. Several times Porter's forces attempted to penetrate the Confederate lines. The Rebel artillery, organized in battalions, attained an effective concentration of fire. The Union artillery, organized on an individual battery level, did not attain an effective concentration of counter fire due to poor positioning and the inability to mass fires above the battery level.

As Porter and Hatch's troops assailed themselves upon the Confederate line, it became evident that Union forces would be unable to breach the line. Porter stopped the attack and retreated across the fields and woods they had just fought through. McDowell

misread the retreat in front of him. He ordered Reynolds Division to move north of the Warrenton Turnpike to bolster the center of the Union forces. This movement left 2,200 Union troops south of the Warrenton Turnpike, with just 1,200 and a battery of artillery on Chinn Ridge. Arrayed against these 2,200 Union soldiers, were over 25,000 of *Longstreet's* troops.<sup>58</sup>

*Longstreet* and *Lee* saw the opportunity to completely destroy the Army of Virginia. *Longstreet* pushed off to take Chinn Ridge and what lay beyond (see map 11). The pitifully small Union force on and immediately around Chinn Ridge suffered devastating losses. Despite these losses, the Union force did not slow down the Confederate advance. The extent of loss to the Army of Virginia would be dependent upon how fast McDowell could respond to slow the oncoming Confederates. McDowell was able to turn around two brigades of Reynold's Division, and he placed these brigades between Chinn Ridge and Groveton with the intent of slowing the advancing Confederates. As the Union artillery batteries on Dogan's Ridge harassed the approaching Rebels, Union troops facing *Jackson* were repositioned to oppose *Longstreet's* attack.

This bloodying allowed Pope, McDowell and Sigel to reposition forces to reinforce the faltering left. Pope up until this point was still unsure of what danger lurked to his left. He asked McDowell if in ordering the two brigades to Chinn Ridge had "not taken too much from the right."<sup>59</sup> McDowell answered negatively and Pope finally realized the magnitude of the disaster that was upon him and the Army of Virginia. Pope then committed himself to creating a defensive line upon Henry Hill while McDowell

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<sup>58</sup> Hennessey, 366.

<sup>59</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 341, 501.



went to Chinn Ridge to help establish the positions. The first forces to arrive at Henry Hill were Brigadier General Zealous Tower's 2nd Brigade and Colonel Robert Stiles' 3rd Brigade of 2nd Division under McDowell's III Corps.

Union forces on Chinn Ridge fought valiantly yet the outnumbered Union forces yielded to the advancing Confederate forces (see map 12). All but one division of *Longstreet's* forces had gone into battle. The Confederate offensive had lost much momentum. With the loss of Chinn Ridge, Pope realized that his army was defeated. The key to salvaging the Army of Virginia was the successful defense of Henry Hill. To defend Henry Hill, Pope needed manpower and time to reposition these troops. Manpower wise, Pope could withdraw forces from in front of *Jackson* as long as *Jackson* did not commit to battle for an appreciable period of time.

As Union troops were withdrawn, *Jackson* did not attack, allowing Pope the needed time to reposition troops to Henry Hill. By 1800, four brigades were set to defend Henry Hill while another was enroute. Pope acknowledged his defeat by issuing orders that directed his right wing to fall back until it was in line with those forces on Henry Hill. Upon receiving word that General Franklin's Corps had reached Centreville, he ordered him to: "Post your command and whatever other troops you can collect and post them in the strong positions around Centerville, and hold them to the last extremity."<sup>60</sup> His orders to Bank's Corps were to protect the trains at Bristoe Station and to "destroy all the public property at Bristoe and fall back upon Centreville at once."<sup>61</sup>

*Lee* and *Longstreet* shuffled forces in order to continue to bear down on the Union forces. Several thousand of *Longstreet's* troops attacked Henry Hill. Like at

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<sup>60</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 78, 416, 435.

<sup>61</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 78, 416, 435.

Chinn Ridge, the Union forces on Henry Hill began to wither. Unlike Chinn Ridge, however, Union reinforcements arrived in time to stem the tide of the Confederate advance. The Confederate momentum died at Henry Hill (see map 13). Despite continued fighting into the early evening, the Confederates did not continue their sustained attack upon Henry Hill. *Jackson's* failure to move his forces for over two hours had allowed Pope to successfully disengage and move to the rear. By 2000 almost all fighting had ceased at Bull Run. Pope's report stated that the army had suffered heavy losses, and was unable to maintain its position so far to the front.<sup>62</sup> He issued orders for the army to retreat to Centreville.

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<sup>62</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 2, p. 746-747.

**Bull Run – Post Battle**  
**“The plan of the enemy will undoubtedly be to turn my flank...”**  
- General John Pope

On 31 August, Pope attempted to reorganize and reconstitute his army. Pope dispatched staff officers in different locations to rally and direct troops to locations where their parent units could form them up and account for them. The flow of messages Pope sent to Halleck varied in tone and demeanor from defeatist to defiant. The messages ran the gamut of whether Halleck felt “secure about Washington should this army be destroyed...”<sup>63</sup> to “... I shall attack again tomorrow if I can; the next day certainly. . . My advice to you ... is that, in view of the satisfactory results, you draw back this army to the entrenchments in front of Washington, and set to work in that secure place to reorganize and secure it.”<sup>64</sup>

Despite the varied content of messages and fluctuating moods, Pope correctly deduced that *Jackson* was attempting to outflank him again. Despite this deduction, Pope felt obliged to heed Washington’s orders to remain where he was. Porter recommended Pope disregard Washington’s tactics and stick with Pope’s own ideas. Pope decided to conduct a defense in depth by moving Reno’s IX Corps to a point two miles west of Germantown, along the Little River Turnpike. As IX Corps moved towards Germantown they encountered *Jackson* at Ox Hill. Supported by other Union forces at Germantown, IX Corps attacked and stopped *Jackson*’s flanking movement. The decision by Pope to maneuver IX Corps towards Germantown decisively saved the rear of the Army of Virginia and their retreat path to Washington.

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<sup>63</sup> O. R. XII, Pt 2, 80.

<sup>64</sup> O. R. XII, Pt 2, 82.

## **Bull Run – Analysis**

The section will analyze two items not specifically covered in the body of this paper. The first will be of the Joint Order issued by Pope to Porter and McDowell on 29 August. The second will be options that were available to Pope on the morning of 30 August.

The Joint Order was written with two purposes in mind. The first was to reattach Hatch's division to McDowell, as he had requested earlier. The second was "...to bring the different corps of the army in such a position that they could assail the enemy at any point between where he was then on the Warrenton Turnpike and Gainesville..." Despite not knowing the exact position of the Confederate forces, as they were retreating down the Warrenton Turnpike, this order would facilitate Porter and McDowell's forces to continuously move towards Warrenton Turnpike where *Jackson* was located. This movement would allow Porter and McDowell's forces to be in a position to strike the flank and rear of *Jackson* and to prevent a junction with *Longstreet*.

The ordered movement while clear to Pope was confusing to Porter and McDowell. Movement forward, a halt, once communications are established with Heintzelman, Sigel and Reno, and preparation for movement to the rear were all contained within the same order. The last major factor of the order was the leeway that Pope gave Porter and McDowell. The leeway that he placed in the order was allowing both generals to "...depart[ing] from this order... if any considerable advantages are to be gained by departing from..." it.<sup>65</sup>

Pope had several options available to him on the morning of 30 August. The first option was obviously to do exactly what he chose to do, stay and fight. This option,

based on misinformation and poor judgment, resulted in the staggering loss of over 25,000 Union and Confederate forces and the emergence of *Lee* with the completion of this, his first full campaign.<sup>66</sup> A second option available would have been a retrograde behind Bull Run. This option would have allowed Pope to regroup his forces while limiting the avenues of approach to *Lee*. The bridges and fords across Bull Run, while not impervious to assault, would limit the quantity of forces *Lee* could bring against Pope. A third alternative could have been the complete withdrawal to Centreville and its outstanding defenses. This retrograde would allow Pope to consolidate his forces and fulfill "...protecting Western Virginia and the nation's capital from danger or insult, ..." of the original order creating the Army of Virginia.<sup>67</sup>

This section clarified the intent of the Joint Order as well as showed how confusing the same order was for Porter and McDowell. The confusion that was created by this order led ultimately to the Court Martial of Porter. The actions that were available to Pope on 30 August were also looked at. The chosen action resulted in the route of the Army of Virginia, the subsequent dismissal of Pope as commanding general and the resumption of McClellan as the commanding general of the Army of Virginia.

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<sup>65</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 2 (Supplement), p. 847- 848.

<sup>66</sup> The Union suffered over 16,000 killed, wounded and missing. The Confederates sustained over 9,000 killed, wounded and missing.

<sup>67</sup> O. R. XII, Pt. 3, p. 435.

## **Bull Run - Summary**

The failure of the Union forces at the Second Battle of Bull Run can only be attributed to Pope. From the beginning, Pope created an environment that hindered trust between himself and his subordinate commanders. His order to “the Officers and Soldiers of the Army of the Virginia” created a chasm between himself, his corps commanders, and McClellan that never closed, even in battle. Pope’s lack of trust with subordinate commanders who had served under McClellan, resulted in his disbelief of critical information that should have altered his thought process for the creation of further orders and actions.

Poor assumptions on Pope’s part resulted in poor orders being issued, which affected the lives, trust and fighting prowess of his forces. His assumption that *Jackson* would remain at Manassas Junction on 28 August produced an order for convergence of all Union forces at Manassas, while disregarding the impending threat that *Longstreet’s* force presented at Thoroughfare Gap. *Jackson* understood the precarious position his forces would be in should he stay at Manassas Junction. Had Pope properly used his cavalry to reconnoiter *Jackson’s* forces, it could have resulted in a scenario that would have been conducive to the purpose for which the Army of Virginia was created, the destruction of *Jackson*.

Further poor assumptions on Pope’s part resulted in the Union army being sent towards Centreville, while neglecting a blocking force at Thoroughfare Gap to prevent the entry of *Lee* and *Longstreet’s* force. Again, proper cavalry usage against *Jackson* could have had disastrous effects upon the Confederate force. In addition, Pope assumed that after engaging King, *Jackson* was in the process of retreating towards Thoroughfare

Gap instead of the actual intent of stopping Pope's army while awaiting the arrival of *Longstreet*. The orders of 29 August stemmed directly from this assumption.

Pope, with the issuance of the Joint Order, poorly estimated when *Lee* and *Longstreet* would unite with *Jackson*. Pope ignored the information that *Lee* and *Longstreet* had arrived at Thoroughfare Gap on the night of 28 August and the Union forces there had retreated. With Thoroughfare Gap only nine miles away, a simple calculation using a standard march rate would have placed *Lee* and *Longstreet's* force linking up with *Jackson* early the next morning. Add to this Pope's complete disregard of Buford's report of size and disposition of *Longstreet's* force, and his obsession to "bag" *Jackson* and one can understand Pope's decision to choose the course of action most advantageous to him.

On the morning of 30 August, Pope erroneously believed that *Jackson* was in retreat and issued orders to pursue. Despite knowing that *Lee* and *Longstreet* were at or through Thoroughfare Gap, Pope attacked *Jackson* in such a way as to expose his flank to them. This attack, in addition to exposing Pope's flank to *Lee* and *Longstreet*, exhausted his troops as they were thrown against *Jackson* still entrenched behind the unfinished railroad.

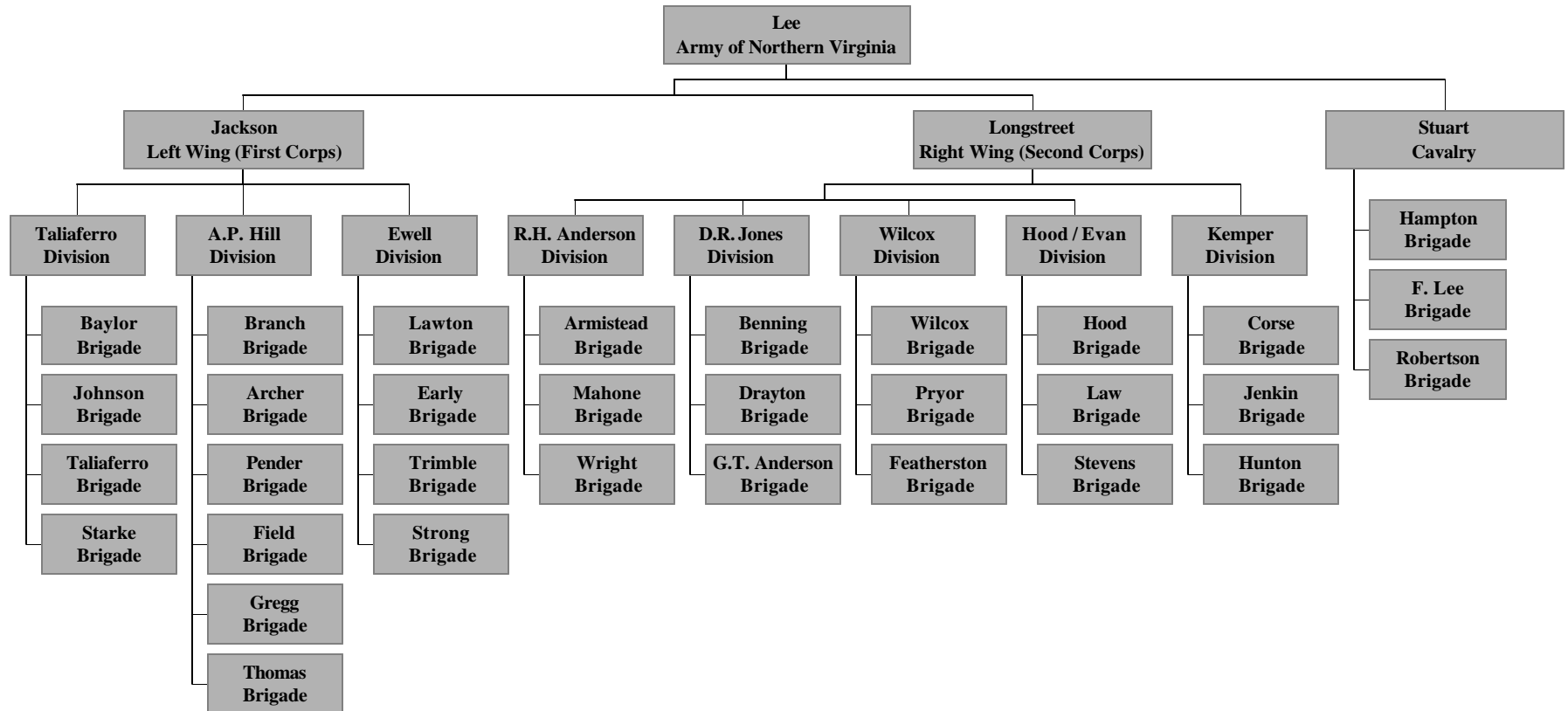
Despite the many excuses and accusations of negligence of his subordinate commanders, Pope could have led the Union forces more efficiently and with greater tactical proficiency. The Union forces fought courageously, yet their effort was stymied by the failure of Pope to make correct assessments of situations as they arose. Had Pope chosen to regard the reports that came to him, he could have created a plan that allowed the Union to regain the initiative. This resumption of initiative coupled with maximizing

the Union numerical advantage against two smaller but separate Confederate forces could have resulted in the defeat of the Army of Northern Virginia or quite possibly their demise. Pope could have maneuvered his forces into a position to block *Lee* and *Longstreet* at Thoroughfare Gap while attacking an isolated *Jackson*. Upon defeating *Jackson*, Pope could have then turned upon *Lee* and *Longstreet* and defeated them using his numerical advantage. Instead, Pope became the general who lost the Second Battle of Bull Run.



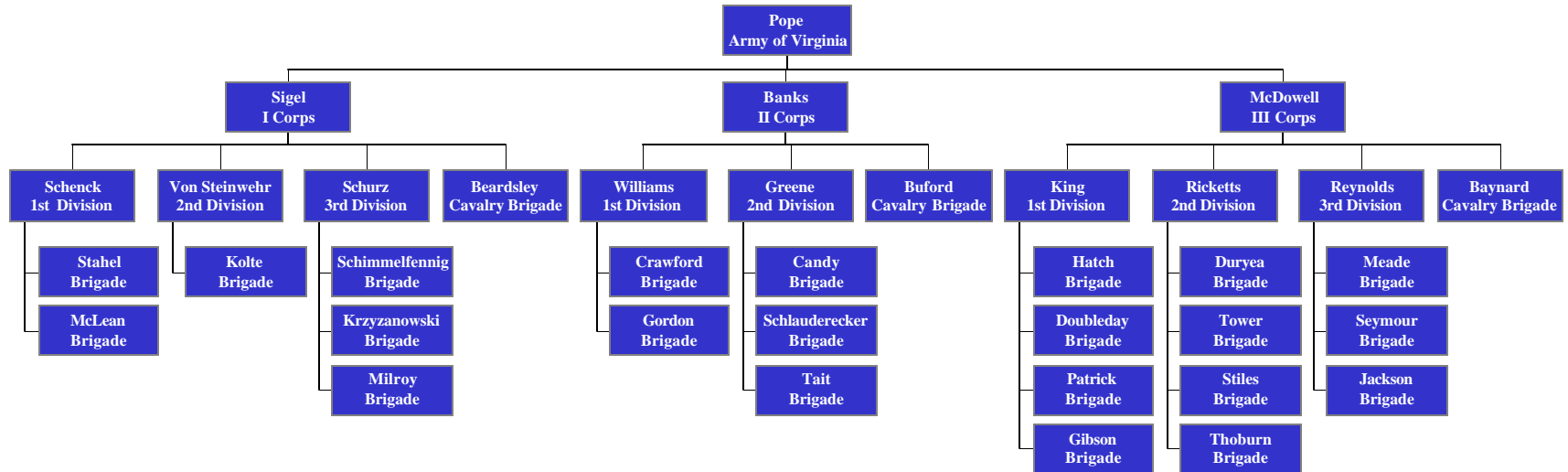
# Army of Northern Virginia

## Order of Battle



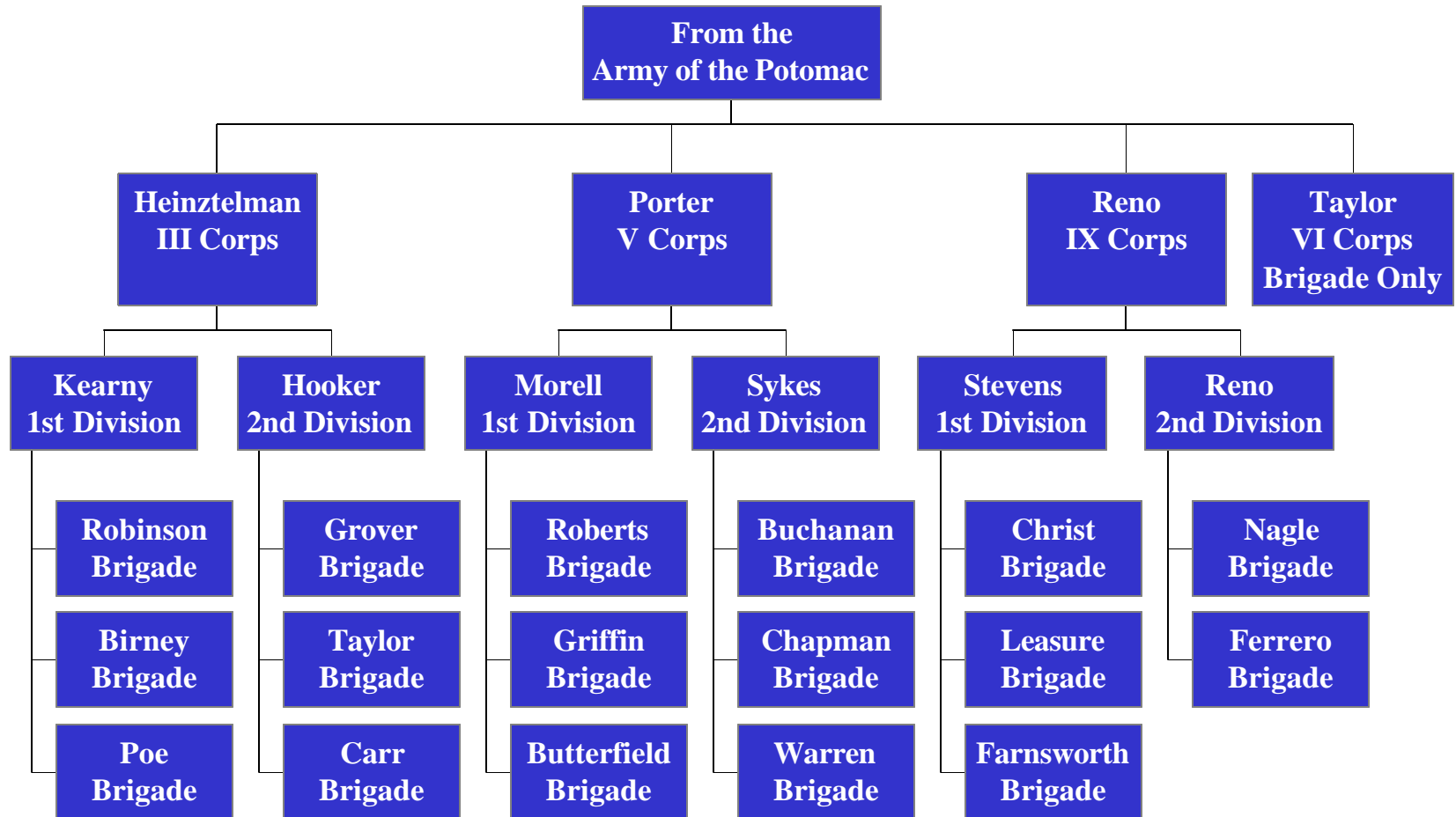
# Army of Virginia

## Order of Battle



# Army of Potomac Assets

## Order of Battle



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